

REPORT  
NASAA Folklorists' Peer Group Workshop  
Submitted to the American Folklore Society  
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On September 14, 2016, the Folklorists' Peer Group met before the National Assembly for State Arts Agencies (NASAA) national conference held in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In my role as consultant, I attended the Folklorists' Peer Group Pre-Conference workshop titled, "Where's My Place in Racial Justice? Reflecting on Personal and Professional Roles in Creating Equity."

Colleagues and friends whom I knew from the American Folklore Society, Marsha MacDowell, Laura Marcus Green, and Amy Kitchener invited me to act as evaluator and reviewer of the Workshop. As a member of the Cultural Diversity Committee of AFS, I accepted the invitation with hopes of adding, in some small way, to the discussion and thereby moving our diversity agenda forward. In this report, I am reporting on the activities at the NASAA Folklorists Peer Group Pre conference workshop; I conclude with some suggestions for future actions that will build on the work done in Grand Rapids.

This report focuses on the Workshop held during the first day of the Folklorists Peer Group gathering at NASAA. See Appendix A for the agenda for the first day meeting.

## **THE ORGANIZATION**

The NASAA membership includes state arts agencies and "represents their individual and collective interests, empower their work through knowledge, and advance the arts as an essential public benefit." The Peer Groups gather individuals within NASAA who share similar functions or goals in the arts; the Folklorists group consists of those persons designated and charged with carrying forth traditional and folklife arts activity—folk festivals, research, surveys of traditional arts, and apprenticeship programs, etc.—in the various states. Not all members are employed as state folklorists; some belong to arts organizations. Among the very active Folklorists' Peer Group are several prominent and very active AFS members, including the already mentioned AFS members who convened the NASAA Peer Folklorists' G Workshop: Amy Kitchener, Alliance for California Traditional Arts and Laura Marcus Green, South Carolina Arts Commission/McKissick Museum.

The Folklorists' Peer Group Pre-Conference Workshop organizers invited April Grayson, the Community Building Coordinator at the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation, to facilitate the workshop. The organizers had identified specific goals that included a discussion of the critical issue of diversity of programming and services. Moreover, they hoped that the attendees would come away with a clearer idea of what "diversity" means and what each of them could do to address racial justice personally and in their organizations. The Hosts/Coordinators hoped the workshop would also provide a venue for participants to reflect on their personal and professional roles in addressing the challenges folklorists face in serving a diverse constituency,

especially those working in State Arts Agencies and to plan engage in planning for future activities to follow up, perhaps at AFS meetings.

## **FACILITATOR AND PARTICIPANTS**

the hosts/coordinators along with facilitator, April Grayson, the Community Building Coordinator at the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation, based at the University of Mississippi organized and coordinated the workshop. Grayson facilitated the Workshop and led the discussion and activities.

The NASAA Folklorists' Peer Group members from the various state arts agencies, as well as universities and museums attended the Workshop; they represented an important component of the AFS public sector membership.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The organizers identified four main topics as a frame for the Pre-Conference Workshop:

- How do we talk about race?
- Practicing listening to build bridges and learn from others' experiences
- Reflecting on my personal role in racial justice
- How can my profession work toward creating racial equity?

These topics covered the main goals for the workshop as the organizers hoped attendees would come away with a deeper understanding of their individual and collective role in addressing issues of racial injustice.

Many of the attendees who are AFS members were present at that meeting and commented on aspects that referenced the AFS's Cultural Diversity Committee's programs at the Annual Meeting. But not all participants are members of AFS or attend the annual meeting; indeed not all participants are folklorists.

I engaged participants in a one-on-one communications and participated in all aspects of the workshop. In formal and informal ways, I gathered information throughout the workshop. I present this assessment of the Workshop, and offer some recommendations for follow up activities below.

In some significant ways, the Workshop offered the opportunity for the AFS membership to engage further in a conversation that was begun at the AFS annual meeting in 2015, that continued at the Miami meeting in 2016, and that will continue in Minneapolis in 2017.

The various activities spurred discussion around the four main topics and judging from the comments in response to the prompts of the Gallery Walk activity, the participants engaged the topics in personal and relevant ways. The evaluations submitted via Survey Monkey is further evidence that the objectives were met.

## ACTIVITIES

### *Introductions*

Several guests spoke welcoming and greeting participants on behalf of their respective affiliations: Cheryl Schiele, National Endowment for the Arts, Folk & Traditional Arts/Multi-disciplinary Arts; Laura Scanlan, State & Regional Director; Andi Mathis, State & Regional Specialist; and Beth Bienvenu, Accessibility Director. A participatory activity organized by Emily Proctor, Tribal Extension Educator, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa, Harbor Springs, Michigan, followed.

**Host/Coordinators** Jon Lohman, Virginia Council on the Humanities and Jon Kay, Traditional Arts Indiana, led the introductions asking for “Snapshots from the Field.” State by state, presenters offered power point or short videos highlighting the activities their organizations were engaged in; the media produced in advance was intended to allow for folk arts peers in attendance to offer a kind of “check-in” –not surprising some had just been recently hired and didn’t have anything prepared, while others had polished and well organized brief presentations. In round robin fashion, the attendees, seated in a circle thus introduced themselves and spoke of their particular institutional affiliation and what they were engaged in at the time. As each person spoke, the rest listened and gained knowledge of who was attending and informally situated herself or himself within the group—the majority were NASAA members and spoke of their role in their particular state agency. See Schedule for the Folklorists Peer Group

After a break, the group reconvened for the section titled “Understanding racism, xenophobia, and intolerance in our work” the organizers and hosts/coordinators for this section of the agenda, Amy Kitchener, Alliance for California Traditional Arts and Laura Marcus Green, South Carolina Arts Commission/McKissick Museum introduced the topic and contextualized the need for a discussion. They introduced the facilitator, April Grayson, William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation. The title of the activities coordinated by Grayson was “Where’s My Place in Racial Justice? Reflecting on Personal and Professional Roles in Creating Equity.”

Before proceeding to the activities, the facilitator spoke briefly of the work of the Winter Institute and provided a brief history of the work the organization does in promoting equity. Acknowledging the various constituencies present, she then spoke about the day’s agenda and how the workshop was organized.

Led by the facilitator, the group broke up into tryads and small groups for a key activity: Story Circle.

### *Story Circle*

The facilitator led the group in an exercise that stressed the importance of listening. We were asked to get into groups of three and talk about the first time we were aware of racism. Then we were invited to share with a larger group. The stories were incredibly poignant and telling. The power of storytelling and of learning how to listen became evident as participants shared their

stories. Many of the participants who answered the Survey Monkey questions expressed that this was one of the most valuable parts of the Workshop.

### *Gallery Walk*

The facilitator explained the notion of the Gallery Walk. She had previously set up flip chart sheets on the walls with prompts that then everyone was to peruse and comment upon with colored markers on the floor in front of each flip chart sheet. The prompts were:

1. Generational Challenges
2. What assets do we have (our fields and the people participating) that can help these issues?
3. Whiteness of the Field/White Savior Complex
4. Institutional Racism in our Field
5. the “Equality vs. Equity” Graphic (see appendix 1)
6. I am part of the problem when I...
7. I am part of the solution when I...
8. Collective Next Steps.

The participants had time to visit each of these “stations” and write comments or questions as a reaction to the prompts using the markers. (See Appendices for photos of the results sheets).

Not surprising, the comments showed diversity in answers yet some patterns emerged as the results provided a glimpse of how participants viewed themselves within the scope of the topics.

After the participants went from station to station in their group, the entire group reconvened around each one and orally summarized and discussed the contributions written on the sheets.

Finally, the group moved on to visit an artist who opened her gallery space/shop and spoke about the work she and others were engaged in in Grand Rapids. We concluded the workshop with a visit to the historic church; we learned the historical and cultural value of the venue.

What follows is a summary of the participants’ responses to the prompts –in **BOLD ALL CAPS**-- provided by the facilitator. A summary of the evaluation provided via the internet (Survey Monkey) is included. Finally, a list of recommendations gleaned from the Workshop, specifically from the Gallery Walk and the Survey Monkey responses.

### **GENERATIONAL CHALLENGES**

This topic elicited a preponderance of comments that addressed the older generation. The general perception was that the Older Generation valued credentials, were white and male, feared change, and that many home institutions were geared towards an older audience.

Several responses addressed the differences in terms of contemporary cultural ways of knowing and communicating, such as the changing concepts of the transmission process, the new global connectivity, social media changes and technological differences.

In addition, positive and negative aspects were referenced for both the older and the younger generations. Noting certain practices such as the older generation's preference for face to face interaction and fear of change, several negative views surfaced. Also noted was the inability of the senior folklorists to recognize the value of the younger generation's interests and their adherence to valuing of credentials "over true hospitability and cultural inclusion in terms of hiring and contract work." Some positive factors were also listed, such as the loss of knowledge that came with the retirement of senior folklorists and the loss of institutional memory. One item that referenced the AFS noted that the Folklore Fellows of the AFS lacked diversity and remained mostly male and white. For the younger generations, the comments were more positive as they were seen as "genre blurring" and more interested in global connectivity and use of technology and social media. Several comments alluded to issues of generational differences along with these stratified comments addressing either younger or older folklorists. For instance, challenges may arise when facing young people's "disinterest" phenomenon and the fact that generations have "different velocities," and are "moving at different rates." Additional comments stressed the challenges of older institutions not embracing youth,

### **WHAT ASSETS DO WE HAVE (OUR FIELDS AND THE PEOPLE PARTICIPATING) THAT CAN HELP ADDRESS THESE ISSUES?**

While not clearly stated what "these issues" referred to, presumably it was the generational divide. Yet, the comments for this prompt included various "solutions" and "assets" that addresses larger issues of diversity. Among the "assets" listed were the field's inherent propensity to address inequality. These "assets" include: compassion, the fact that folklorists consider their work "a calling, not just a job," cultural competency and communication, the training that includes "listening, valuing difference, approaching mutual engagement, desire to impact community wellness, etc." One person noted the ability to listen and another noted that folklorists could "Use our skills as ethnographers to reinterpret our work place roles to constituents."

Also noted were the ability to speak to inclusivity, ability to mobilize funding or access to money and information, grant writing, a desire to make the invisible visible (marginalized communities), disseminate counter narratives, and the folklorists' knowledge of organizational systems. Not surprising, several comments referred to the human capital, the people – both folklorists and others – who can assist and are therefore assets: Grantees, legislators, councils, artists, and a diverse constituency. As an asset, one person listed "my own personal experience" and several alluded to their position as advocates as an asset; they noted that they could "speak truth to power through folk arts presentations," help artists navigate bureaucracy, and offer "public programs that connect great community."

## WHITENESS OF THE FIELD/WHITE SAVIOR COMPLEX

This prompt generated self-reflection and elicited responses in the form of questions as well as comments linked to white privilege. The answers could be grouped along three main strands: self-reflection / whiteness, positionality of folklorists and of the organizations where they work, and working as allies with POC. In the first—self-reflection/whiteness—strand, the questions around white privilege and agency predominated. Beginning with basic questions of definition and parameters (What are the characteristics of whiteness? Who are the heroes of folklife? Guilt or agency or privilege?) to questions engaging the self: What is the path? How do we turn this privilege into a good thing — useful tool? What are you willing to give up? Power and control.

Noting the “Changing definitions of traditional arts and folk arts” and questioning the premise of “whiteness” it was noted that the concept issue of race “Not binary.” The way “Whiteness” exists as a culture, and how it is systemic seemed to segue into conclusion such as: “The whiteness of the field is unhealthy. The field will perish if we don’t address it.” Presumably, when the comment said, “we control the resources and distribution” it meant that the white arts organizations and those working there do indeed control the system. Another comment noted that “Arts orgs and funding were set up by elite “fine art” model — we inherited that” but offered no solution.

The positionality of the folklorists within institutions and vis a vis the greater society was another strand. The comment/question raised the issue: Whiteness within home institutions, especially in states perceived as being “white” — how do we complicated that picture and combat racism within white spaces where there is no apparent/perceived “conflict.” Several other comments focused on whiteness as a normative and questioned the cultural ethos of whiteness. The comment that “Ultimately the field suffers from a “savior” complex” seemed to be linked to one that stated that “Fear of doing this is paralyzing—leads to inaction” although what “this” referenced was not clearly articulated. Curiously, one commented, “We’re not all white!!! —> Ethnicity vs. race and layers of ethnicity,” noting the nuances of ethnic identities.

Finally, the third strand offers comments and impetus for doing work along POC folklorists. One comment cited “Not valuing POC folklorists and their impact nearly enough, and specifically at our academic programs” and another noted the need to “support of POC-led folklore projects.” a listing of POC in the field was provided -- Worth Long, Roland Freeman, Zora Neale Hurston, John Work, Margaret Walker Alexander, Gladys-Marie Fry, Phyllis May-Machunda, Guillermo de los Reyes, Solimar Otero, Wanda Addison, Anand Prahlad, Turry Flucker, Ana Cara, José Limón, Américo Paredes.

The Model for dismantling racist structures was outlined thus:

Top-down decision making	consultant/advisors
Working groups	By consensus

I was not sure that the implication here was that we in having a consultant to lead the workshop were complicit in top-down decision making.

One participant noted that we should “focus on being a catalyst for good” citing a need for change and promoting the Internationalization of AFS” offered the example of the Chinese thrust of activities.

## **INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN OUR FIELD**

This prompt elicited a wide range of responses ranging from the perceptions that folklore is a white thing to a number comments about institutional racism embedded in the very nature of arts programming. After reviewing the comments and the discussion on site, it appears that alongside a discussion of the institutional culture the idea emerges that the hierarchies of funding and resources also reflect an institutionalized racism. Furthermore, some larger overarching issues also surfaced such as policies, graduate education, and language used to refer to certain populations.

First, the notion that “folklore” is a white thing and issues of racist assumptions and the roots of the field already being “tainted” as it is inherently a colonizing endeavor to study “the other.” One participant noted that “White folklorists can study anything” but that there is an “assumption that POC will only be interested in studying their own communities.” This notion is also linked to the “racist assumptions about POC working the field” and holding “assumptions about others without really knowing them.” The lack of POC/G at the and ultimately how racism seems to establish or inscribe hierarchies of power within institutions. leadership level

A second major area of concern emerged in terms of funding and one participant succinctly asked “Who has the resources/safety net to study/practice folklore? And why?” Key questions to organize the other comments grouped within institutional racism and resources. Obviously the institutional practices of grantsmaking and the business model used by government agencies highlight the lack of equity and uneven ground upon which many POC artists and organizations must navigate. Concern of sufficient and equitable support (as more than one participant noted, the “big organizations get more” as “major funding continues to established large organizations”). “Grantsmanship favors white vocabulary (and literacy and access to technology), values” It is therefore clear why non profit arts 501c3 and small POC led organizations are left out. One participant conclude, “Not to mention class.” Language that becomes a label: “at risk,” “underserved” and other such terms used to signal the other and those who have little or no access to resources.

Finally, participants noted that the bureaucratic gatekeeping especially in terms of national policy on citizenship and immigration and the notion that “It’s the way it’s done” constitute institutional racism. One participant offered a solution to increasing the number of students entering the field: “Change graduate school admissions to be more inclusive and offer aid to all grad students.”

While the topic elicited succinct actions, the general tone was one of describing what institutional racism results in and the conditions it propagates.

## **EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY GRAPHIC**

Perhaps the most popular prompt, the graphic offered ample and clear comments. Everyone enjoyed the graphic (see appendix) and it elicited great comments that predictability offered reflection and solutions. We can control boxes, but not the fence, one participant noted. Another asked: What if the fence is a grant application? A long discussion via the comments followed as to how the Fence can be the “systems we use to identify artists and cultural communities (accessibility, technology, stability, etc.).” So the fence could be: the grant application, geography, technology, language skills/barriers, education/writing styles, required matching funds/resources, lack of access — awareness of opportunities, distrust of government/authorities unwillingness to change/be nimble,” and another added “the clock or calendar.” It was the most interactive prompt as folks kept commenting on each other’s comments. One had the following exchange: “I like this a lot! Me, too! Thirded!” the one that was thinking outside the box to solutions, wrote: “We are focused on boxes, but how to get a seat INSIDE the stadium and the skills and opportunities to play the game?”

### **I AM PART OF THE PROBLEM WHEN I \_\_\_\_\_.**

As a response to this prompt, participants wrote insightful and often telling comments to fill in the blank. Several comments had an added “ditto” showing the interactive nature of the exercise as participants read each other’s comments.

- Don’t offer potential solutions
- When I don’t speak up at staff meetings
- Don’t leverage my privilege for those whose power is not acknowledged
- Don’t speak up and when I do!!!
- Am complicit
- When I stay within my comfort zone
- Don’t say what I think
- Act quickly without thinking (ditto, more ditto!)
- When I’m not patient enough to really listen
- I make assumptions re: race, ethnicity, age, or social class (ditto)
- I am trying to fit artists into institutionalized and/or preconceived categories
- Preconceived categories influenced by history of colonialization
- When I don’t listen
- Say or do nothing/am silent
- Am from the government
- Not widening the folk arts definition and include all aspects of an artist’s artistry
- Am not trying to expand our circle
- Accepting the status quo —because the problems too big to impact



- When I don't have the authority
- When I don't have appropriate communication words
- When I work in a vacuum (or silo)
- Forget to include community reps at all levels of project management and progress
- Accept status quo (x 2)
- Alienate the power structure
- speak over people
- expect "diversity" to fall into my outstretched hand
- don't provide options for accessibility
- when not recruiting new folklorists
- when we don't revision the field

It is clear that the participants took the prompt seriously and honestly filled in the blank after self-reflection as they did when they came to the next prompt that asked about solutions.

### **I AM PART OF THE SOLUTION WHEN I \_\_\_\_\_**

As for the previous prompt, in this section, the participants' contributions are telling in that they reflect their sense of their own agency. The responses reveal self-reflection and honest and frank words to fill in the blank. I have chosen to leave them as they wrote them to demonstrate the diversity of comments. Several of these appear again in the Survey Monkey responses.

- Get around the rules
- Am willing to take a risk
- Look into my self perceptions and bias (ditto, need to stay open)
- Inviting/collaborating with people who have the skills/knowledge
- don't try to do everything to fix everything
- step back and listen
- Say something instead of being silent (but is this ALWAYS true? Context)
- Be patient and provide deep technical assistance
- listen and hear what folks are saying — ask if I'm doing it right
- reflect on positionality
- insist that those who ask me to speak for others invite the other to speak
- when I just "be" with people
- acknowledge my privilege

- Give up authority
- share authority
- Move out of comfort zone and engage
- Use my position to raise awareness/make change (but How?)
- Keep investigating policies (eg Freedom of speech)
- question the status quo
- ask hard question and be willing to take some heat/risk
- trust myself
- step back and create space
- share knowledge
- provide access + advocacy
- educate panels/panelists
- serve as an educator
- provide
- take criticism/feedback from the community I serve and apply it constructively
- stay curious
- invite challenge
- Find allies
- Broaden space for others engagement
- Write grants for people
- Meaningful public programming!
- Provide mentorship and PAID internships to emerging folklorists of color (and allied fields and lay folklorists)
- Provide access to fieldwork equipment!

One particular participant quoted from “The Long Haul” by Miles Horton, “Sit with discomfort, don’t expect a quick solution.” “The Long Haul” —Myles Horton, Highlander

## **COLLECTIVE NEXT STEPS**

The last prompt asked participants to envision next steps. While the prompt asked for collective next steps, many chose to offer individual steps. The participants’ responses can be sorted into two key areas: people, and systemic change—that is, institute specific strategies to address the issue of racism and of diversity.

### *People*

Several participants identified mentoring and claimed that next steps would involve establishing mentoring relationships through “dynamic outreach” and recruitment. Along with more mentoring, one participant also mentioned internships. Training “community scholars from different communities.” A couple of participants also commented on how it was necessary to be actively “involved in transitioning to the next generations of public folklorists.” One participant also suggested that we “Continue the practice of story sharing around tender issues to create ease in future discussions,” and another suggested we “share success (and shortcomings) - stories from the field.” Folklorists should “reassess who ‘we’ are —redefine ‘the field’ to be more inclusive.” Furthermore, they must “Develop linguistic and cultural competence.” A concomitant sentiment as the participant who suggests we “identify a common language around equity.”

### *Systemic change*

Several participants suggested various strategies as next steps, most often suggesting policy or actions that would take the discussion to actions. A participant addressing the issue of language and specifically the use of the word “folklore” in certain communities of colore wrote: “Think this may take some reimagining, looking to overlapping fields — examining the language we use. ‘Folklore’ in some places reads very white/historical.” Another also concerned with language wrote: “Identify common language around equity.” Another one suggested a similar strategy where we would “Meet people where they are —> examine ingrained racism in field —> acknowledge it.” More direct and action oriented next steps included having a leadership institute for folklorists of color, an audit to evaluate the existing obstacles, and accepting that we have a systemic problem of inclusion and establishing steps to change it.

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This workshop opened avenues for continuing the engaged dialogue that addresses how, in addition to the general concern about the lack of diversity within our field, we can move to find ways of channeling our professional skills to address diversity through our work and to effect significant change. The current conversation around the Black Lives Matter movement and the debates around immigration issues have become critical in our field, as they affect the communities where we work. Furthermore, the issues faced by folklorists in their home communities reflect a reality throughout the United States and reach a broader global context. Thus, our work in the workshop and beyond allowed the participants to set a precedent for other folklorists and workers in the traditional arts to gather to explore the conditions in their own communities and to address challenges perhaps offering solutions to these and to commiserate and share best practices.

## Survey Monkey Results

After the workshop, the organizers invited all participants to take the survey (9 questions) and provide feedback. Only 15 participants responded.

Summaries of the answers appear below each question. The entire thread of answers for Questions 5-9 are included and provide a better sense of what the participants who responded were thinking.

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### **Q1 Has your organization done an assessment of climate or environmental factors that foster/hinder, support/don't support an inclusive workplace? If so, please describe.**

- Answered: 15
- Skipped: 0

14 answered No or not to my knowledge

1 answered: Not sure, I am new to my agency. But we are tracking percentages of our grantees and working towards having a more inclusive portfolio of applicants and grantees, among other programs.

### **Q2 Does your organization have any policies, statements, or other mechanisms to address racial equity? If so, what are they?**

3 answered NO

6 answered YES explaining that it is mostly the state mandated language

1 --I'm sure we have the standard language about non-discrimination - but I don't believe we meet standards of equity.

1 –answered by including the language: EQUAL EMPLOYMENT AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OPPORTUNITY The organization is committed to the full utilization of all human resources and to a policy of equal employment opportunity. South Arts will not discriminate against employees or applicants for employment on any legally recognized basis including, but not limited to, veteran status, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, physical or mental disability, age, sexual orientation, or any other protected group status as defined by law. You may discuss equal employment opportunity related questions with the Finance & HR Director. PROHIBITION OF UNLAWFUL DISCRIMINATION Any discrimination is unlawful and will not be tolerated. South Arts is committed to taking all reasonable steps to prevent discrimination from occurring. If any employee believes he/she has been discriminated against, or is aware of discrimination against others, the employee should immediately report the

details to the Finance & HR Director. All reported incidents of discrimination will be investigated. Retaliation against any employee by another employee or by the organization for reporting a discriminatory complaint or participation in the investigation of the complaint is unlawful and will not be tolerated at South Arts. Any such complaints should immediately be reported to the Finance & HR Director. Any complaint will be immediately investigated and if substantiated, appropriate disciplinary actions, up to and including discharge will be taken.

1 -- We have one grant program only open to artists of color.

1 --Job listings include diversity language.

1 --We also have an Arts Participation program devoted to this purpose, and have done/are doing special outreach initiatives targeting underserved populations.

**Q3 Does your organization offer any programs in languages other than English?**

13 answered NO

2 answered YES

**Q4 In areas where bilingual populations are present, are any of your organization's published materials bilingual?**

12 Answered NO

2 Answered  
YES

1 Skipped

**Q5 Which particular approaches from the session did you find effective and useful? Which were not?**

- Answered: 14
- Skipped: 1

I thought the time devoted to the workshop could have been reduced. Perhaps eliminated one session - the film component. I thought the exercise to share the first time we were confronted with racism was very thought provoking.

10/3/2016 6:34 AM

I thought talking about personal experiences in small groups was effective.

9/21/2016 3:55 AM

I really enjoyed all of April's session. I thought it was very well facilitated. The only thing I would have liked more discussion of how to work within the constraints of state politics.

9/21/2016 3:35 AM

story circle useful too much time walking around

9/20/2016 4:00 AM

the story circles - we as folklorists never tell our own stories. The experience was enriching. The general tone of the workshop felt like a "101". Given our training/experience, it could have been more advanced.

9/20/2016 3:29 AM

break out sessions

9/20/2016 3:23 AM

I really enjoyed all of the activities and exercises. I found the story circles and gallery walk especially productive.

9/20/2016 1:21 AM

I thought that breaking into smaller and smaller groups was a great way to structure the session. It made the topics feel personal and like you could dig deep and be open. I don't think any of the activities were no useful. They all served as important tools for dialogue.

9/20/2016 12:47 AM

The talking circle - repeated the skill of listening and reflecting in different breakouts.

9/19/2016 4:36 AM

Storytelling was useful. Timed exercises were not useful, but less because they were timed and more because there was not enough time to discuss ideas, and because the talking points assumed everyone agreed and was familiar with a certain array of diversity issues.

9/19/2016 12:43 AM

Loved the story circles and triads to break down "barriers" and have open communication. The gallery walk helped us to taking our thinking to the next steps and to what the factors are in addressing race and equity in our field. I wish we had had more time to go deeper, draw out some of our work. It felt rushed at the end!

9/18/2016 11:48 PM

The triad group to discuss the video was probably the most useful for me. There was sharing and advice-giving. Activities with no opportunities for advice-giving were less useful (eg-the groups of 5 sharing stories, the walk around/gallery tour).

9/16/2016 11:42 PM

I thought all the activities were effective I think discussing situations to address racism when you come across it and the role playing how to respond would be good.

9/16/2016 2:46 AM

I REALLY appreciated the story circle. I also appreciated the exercise involving open questions.

9/15/2016 2:49 PM

**Q6 What new ideas or insights are you taking away from this workshop?**

- Answered: 14
- Skipped: 1

The exercise to share the first time we were confronted with racism would be good for a board or staff retreat.

10/3/2016 6:34 AM

I learned that I need to simply listen more and realize that I may not always understand.

9/21/2016 3:55 AM

That we have soooooo much more to do. But it is really important to keep chipping away at it. We need more voices at the table when decisions are made.

9/21/2016 3:35 AM

I am not alone!

9/20/2016 4:00 AM

"Cracking the Code" dvd The importance of speaking up when I see people being treated inequitably

9/20/2016 3:29 AM

White privileges

9/20/2016 3:23 AM

Thinking about how to be a voice of anti-racism within my home institution (with an all-white staff) in a state that the stats say is 90% white.

9/20/2016 1:21 AM

My personal place of white privilege and empowered to do more than I have been. Our access statement allows me to disrupt oppressive statements and move on to other business.

9/19/2016 4:36 AM

That privilege can be used productively.

9/19/2016 2:50 AM

How intensely state folklorists think about diversity in "the field" - our field of public sector folklore? the larger field of folklore studies? culture workers in general?

9/19/2016 12:43 AM

Just how ingrained racism can be, how pervasive and "invisible," and how we need to be vigilant to see "the waters we swim in." I am happy to see how important this issue is to my colleagues, and the creative thinking that went into brainstorming around solutions.

9/18/2016 11:48 PM

I must be more proactive in my own work, I must be willing to put myself on the line for what I believe in.

9/16/2016 11:42 PM

Ways to help the field move forward

9/16/2016 2:46 AM

Mostly staff development techniques. I have a few budding ideas about ways we might expand these tools through our folklife programming to address statewide racism issues, but nothing fully formed yet.

9/15/2016 2:49 PM

**Q7 Future Actions - What parting thoughts do you have about steps you can take to address racial equity in your work?**

- Answered: 14
- Skipped: 1



I work in a very racially balanced office, but more thought needs to be given to our programs.

10/3/2016 6:34 AM

I vow to address comments and actions that seem culturally insensitive, and to foster a more inclusive environment.

9/21/2016 3:55 AM

To make sure diverse voices help shape our folklife program.

9/21/2016 3:35 AM

examine Whiteness literature

9/20/2016 4:00 AM

Bringing what I experienced, including the story circle technique, into our agency's strategic planning process.

9/20/2016 3:29 AM

Break down barrier in small steps

9/20/2016 3:23 AM

Considering eliminating barriers in trad. arts programming so that all can be included.

9/20/2016 1:21 AM

More bilingual (or better) programs/publications, extended outreach to communities of color and those with issues of access, partnerships with organizations already doing this work well, continued consultation and facilitated workshops for our staff on this topic.

9/20/2016 12:47 AM

The full staff should participate in a workshop at the next staff retreat. I hope that the Arts Ed staff will support me since they also had a workshop.

9/19/2016 4:36 AM

Try to use my white privilege productively.

9/19/2016 2:50 AM

I want to start with myself, to explore any biases I might have and how they might show up in my work, do an internal audit to improve my own practice as a folklorist.

9/18/2016 11:48 PM

Strategic fieldwork and cultivating new community connections. Something I will think about, though will probably not act on or vocalize yet, is how to even talk about racial equity in my workplace--how can I be part of an environment where discussions are honest, safe, and productive?

9/16/2016 11:42 PM

I'm not sure

9/16/2016 2:46 AM

I'm eager to share my experience with my colleagues and suggest the exercises for staff development.

9/15/2016 2:49 PM

**Q8 Are there actions we need to take as a field? If so, what are they?**

- Answered: 12
- Skipped: 3

Encouraging minorities to enter the field. Take true action steps -- scholarships, paid internships, etc. for minority students to encourage them to perhaps enter the field.

10/3/2016 6:34 AM

Well, public folklore has long been considered an understanding an inclusive field, given its close connection to cultural anthropology. However, this may leave some individuals in the field believing they are immune from being culturally insensitive. This may not always be the case.

9/21/2016 3:55 AM

Continued assessment of how well we are doing with inclusion and if improvements are being made (using data), would be useful I think.

9/21/2016 3:35 AM

foster welcoming climate for POC

9/20/2016 4:00 AM

There were some very good suggestions that were written down on the sheets posted around the room. One that sticks with me is the funding/scholarship of people of color to enter the field of folklore, including for mid-career folks.

9/20/2016 3:29 AM

talk to people who are outside of "our circle"

9/20/2016 3:23 AM

I really think that addressing these issues within my home institution is very important, but without any others participating in this training, it's difficult to bring home, as I'm already a newbie and the "weird" folklorist. NEA-mandated training for home institutions who house folk & traditional arts programs?

9/20/2016 1:21 AM

Yes- determine how to shift the structure to improve racial diversity in the workforce, continue expanding the definition of "traditional" or "folk" to include existing traditions within communities of color that may not be regularly acknowledged, self-studies of populations reached and how to improve connections within non-white, non-middle class communities.

9/20/2016 12:47 AM

To not see our minority peers as only single-interest professionals. They are as engaged in all group folklore as myself.

9/19/2016 4:36 AM

It feels like we need to do an audit to look candidly at the factors that are keeping our field from becoming more inclusive. I also would like to see how we can bring our skill sets to bear to address race in the communities where we work. I would like to see us have another workshop, longer, maybe even 1.5 days to go deeper into the work.

9/18/2016 11:48 PM

Hire more diverse people. I think we need to help each other create more inclusive definitions of "tradition", "folk", "folklore" etc, so that diverse communities can identify with our work without us having to explain to and even argue that they do in fact relate to our work (this is really having a branding that gets past folk as white).

9/16/2016 11:42 PM

This was a great action - more activities like this, please.

9/15/2016 2:49 PM

**Q9 Thinking ahead to a possible day-long workshop (possibly at the American Folklore Society Meetings) on race and social equity, what topics or issues would you want to see addressed?**

Answered: 13

Skipped: 2

Systemic and implicit racism in the field, and the fact that most folklorists are white and may be undoubtedly privileged. Workshops on how to use this "privilege" in a positive way may be useful.

9/21/2016 3:55 AM

I will not be there, but I think doing some modeling that looks at who are making the decisions in the field and various programs would be useful. The youthwork field has some good models for doing this.

9/21/2016 3:35 AM

Sorry, I don't go to AFS. So this is not an equitable idea for state folklorists imbedded in arts councils.

9/20/2016 4:00 AM

Address economic/social class equity

9/20/2016 3:29 AM

how to make "others" feel welcome

9/20/2016 3:23 AM

Lack of diversity within the field.

9/20/2016 1:21 AM

More about the "white savior" idea, more about making safe spaces for the lgbtq+ community

9/20/2016 12:47 AM

I applaud that this will be taken up at AFS, but that is not the same peer group as folklorists representing state programs and many of us cannot attend, or are not folklorists. Please consider

ways to hold these conversations with SAA boards and management. Without staff. Change needs to happen at the budget and policy level.

9/19/2016 4:36 AM

the value and drawbacks of folklore studies training for those of us in government jobs; the contributions that those who have not been trained in folklore studies can make to public sector folklore work, as well as the limitations of their backgrounds

9/19/2016 12:43 AM

It would be great to have a session where we look at case studies, so we could really wrap our minds about how to address race and equity in our day-to-day work at home. And to keep thinking about tangible steps to make our field more inclusive.

9/18/2016 11:48 PM

-how to define "traditional" and "folk" in such a way that it doesn't alienate people

9/16/2016 11:42 PM

Roleplaying.

9/16/2016 2:46 AM

Cultural appropriation.

9/15/2016 2:49 PM

\*

## **APPENDIX A Agenda**

### **Folk and Traditional Arts**

September 14, 2016

Emerald Room, Amway Grand Hotel

Grand Rapids, MI

### **Wednesday, September 14**

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#### **8:45 – 8:50 am Welcome and Overview of the Program**

Members of the Folk and Traditional Arts Session Planning Committee

**8:50 – 9:00 am** Greetings from NEA folks: Cheryl Schiele, Folk & Traditional Arts/Multi-disciplinary Arts; Laura Scanlan, State & Regional Director; Andi Mathis, State & Regional Specialist; and Beth Bienvenu, Accessibility Director.

#### **9:00 - 9:15 am**

Initiation of participatory activity organized by Emily Proctor, Tribal Extension Educator, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa, Harbor Springs, Michigan

#### **9:15 – 10:30 am**

“Snapshots from the Field” (Introductions)

**Host/Coordinators:** Jon Lohman, Virginia Council on the Humanities and Jon Kay, Traditional Arts Indiana

Presenters: Via media produced in advance, all folk arts peers in attendance

#### **10:30 – 10:45 am Break**

#### **10:45 am–12:15 pm**

PART 1 “Understanding racism, xenophobia, and intolerance in our work”

**Hosts/Coordinators:** Amy Kitchener, Alliance for California Traditional Arts and Laura Marcus Green, South Carolina Arts Commission/McKissick Museum

**Presenter:** April Grayson, William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation

*Where's My Place in Racial Justice? Reflecting on Personal and Professional Roles in Creating Equity*

- How do we talk about race?
- Practicing listening to build bridges and learn from others' experiences
- Reflecting on my personal role in racial justice
- How can my profession work toward creating racial equity?

**12:15 – 1:30 pm** Lunch on your own

**1:45 – 3:15 pm**

**PART 2 “Understanding racism, xenophobia, and intolerance in our work”**

**Hosts/Coordinators:** Amy Kitchener, Alliance for California Traditional Arts and Laura Marcus Green, South Carolina Arts Commission/McKissick Museum

**Presenters:** April Grayson, William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation

**3:15 - 3:30 p.m. Break**

**3:30 – 4:00 pm**

**Reflections and continuing the discussion...**

Dr. Norma Cantu

**4:15 – 7:30ish p.m.**

Local Traditions walking field trip including dinner – all located within less than a mile from conference headquarters

1. Fountain Street Church

Registered by a volunteer in the Michigan Stained Glass Census  
([www.michiganstainedglass.org](http://www.michiganstainedglass.org))

one of our statewide digital humanities projects

<http://www.michiganstainedglass.org/collections/building.php?id=17-83-35>

A member of the church staff will talk with us about the church and its windows; Marsha MacDowell will talk about the MSGC and community engagement in documenting cultural assists

2. Have Company

<http://have-company.com/residency/>

136 S. Division Ave

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Owner Marlee Grace will talk with group and how a teaching/sales venue like this intersects with traditional arts.

3. Ending up at dinner at Luna Restaurant

<http://lunagr.com/about/>

64 Ionia Ave SW #100

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Mario Cascante, owner, lawyer, and a first-generation immigrant from Costa Rica will talk with group



## APPENDIX B GRAPHIC

### EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY



In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.



In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.



In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.

## APPENDIX C FLIP CHART SHEETS – PROMPTS AND COMMENTS

Some older guard decision-makers valuing the traditional (folklore, etc.) over true hospitality + cultural inclusion (in terms of hiring, content work, etc.)

**Generational challenges**

Folklore follows white rules

Fear of change

- technological differences
- social media changes
- new global connectivity - blending of cultures
- loss of knowledge w/in agencies or traditions
- "folk" terminology
- ↑ genre blurring
- FACE to FACE community organizing
- Different v. global connectivity
- Young person disinterest phenomenon - Variable to recognize young people interests
- Failure of non-profit model to create growth

Face to Face/Virtual Interaction

Senior folks have impt. institutional memory → passing tradition, relationships

- saying these institutions ground toward older audience and engaging young people

- changing relationships - how do traditional and new relate?

- debt pay grades

Not being offended that younger folks may have new/different ideas + ways of doing things

Realize that veteran folklorists have wisdom → pass it to younger folklorists

Creation of The old folklorist home (Network)

Compassion technology

What assets do we have (our field and the people participating) that can help address these issues?

No. 3

a calling not just a job

- ✓ Cultural competency + comm.
- ✓ Our training:
  - listening, valuing difference, approaching mutual engagement, desire to impact community wellness, etc.
- ✓ The field speaks to inclusivity (at its best)
- ✓ Ability to document cultural equity collaboratively
  - Institutionalality + not working
  - \$ or access to \$ + info to \$
  - Skills = grant writing
  - Making the invisible visible (marginalized contributors)
  - honored + value - dissemination
  - COOPERATION

\* Stories

to foster engagement, understanding, national history, to make "our" history

top down decision making	consulted/decisions
working groups	by consensus

Model for dismantling racist structure

"Whiteness" as a culture - systems

internationalization of AFS - impacts?

ie - Chinese threat of activities

- support for POC-led folklore projects
- focus on being a catalyst for good + change



*Whiteness of the field/white savior complex*

*Not valuing POC folklorists + their impact nearly enough, and specificity of our academic program*

*Whiteness of the field/white savior complex*

*What is the path? How do we turn this privilege into a good thing - useful tool?*

*What are the characteristics of whiteness?*

*Who are the heroes of folklife?*

*We control the resources + distribution*

*"Whiteness" is systemic*

*The whiteness of the field is unhealthy*

*The field will perish if we don't address it*

*What are you willing to give up? Power + control.*

*changing definitions of traditional arts + folk arts*

*Not binary*

*its org's funding were set up by elite - fine art model - we inherited that.*

*POC folklorists + their impact nearly enough, and specificity of our academic program*

*Whiteness of the field/white savior complex*

*What is the path? How do we turn this privilege into a good thing - useful tool?*

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*its org's funding were set up by elite - fine art model - we inherited that.*

*Training to build relationships*

*\* We can Record People in Their Own Voices*

*Recognition that there is a problem: the desire for change*

*The people themselves.*

*Using ours as common ground/speak for dialogue.*

*my own personal experiences*

*Knowledge of organizational systems - how they work + how they can be modified/changed/ignored*

*- insisting a collaboration + finding partners to use their voices to express their own cultural knowledge.*

*- patience + listening skills*

*- use our skills as ethnographers to reinterpret our work place rules to constituents.*

*- speak truth to power through folk arts present-ations*

*- helping artists navigate bureaucracy - experienced field constituency*

*- granters*

*- legislators*

*- Councils*

*- folk arts present-ations*

*- experienced field constituency*

*trained in cultural sensitivity*

*Who has the resources/safety net to study folklore?*

*Institutional racism in our field*

*"Folklore" is a white thing*

*Cultural appropriation*

*unintentional exclusion hidden within grant processes*

*roots of colonialism FIELD Study of "the other"*

*racist assumptions about POC working in the field -*

*lack of POC/BI at leadership level*

*grantmanship favors white vocabulary + service non-profit (501(c)(3)) organizations*

*Lack of equity in funding distribution*

*racism in our institutional hierarchies of power*

*overuse of business model in our agencies of govt.*

*Not to mention class*

*expanding that*

*its org's funding were set up by elite - fine art model - we inherited that.*

*POC folklorists + their impact nearly enough, and specificity of our academic program*

*Whiteness of the field/white savior complex*

*What is the path? How do we turn this privilege into a good thing - useful tool?*

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*What are you willing to give up? Power + control.*

*changing definitions of traditional arts + folk arts*

*Not binary*

*its org's funding were set up by elite - fine art model - we inherited that.*

*National Policy on Language, Technology Barrier*

*Citizenship + Immigration*

*\* Bureaucratic gatekeeping*

*"It's the way it's done"*

*assumptions about others w/o really knowing them*

*Language that becomes a label - "at risk" - "underserved"*

*Change grad school admissions to be more inclusive AND open aid to all good students.*

*PEA/underserved = POC/folk artists/inequitable funding*

### EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY



in the final image, it is asserted that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.

In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.

in the third stage, all these can see the gains without a supports or accommodation because the cause of the inequality was addressed. The systematic barrier has been removed.

- How do we destroy systemic injustice?

What is this called? terminology for end goal.

I think we aim for this / are aware that each community has different needs but still not quite enough

I like this  
~~the~~ Me too! That  
Everyone benefits, +  
this way there are  
unintended pos<sup>ve</sup>  
consequences.

What if the fence  
is a grant application?

clock/calendar = fence

## CONCEPTS OF TIME

Fence = grant app  
geography  
\* tech &  
language skills/borders  
educat/writing styles  
matching funds/resources  
access - awareness of options.  
distrust of govt/authorities  
unwillingness to change/like mind

Fence = systems <sup>we've</sup> to  
identify artists &  
cultural communities  
(accessibility, technology,  
stability, etc.)

We are trying to apply this model to our field. It is hard, but important.

How do you identify the fence? diff

We are focused on boxes, but how to get ~~people~~ a seat inside the stadium + the skills + opportunities to play the game?



When I Don't speak up at Staff meetings

I am part of the problem when I

Don't offer potential solutions.

Don't forego my privilege for those whose power is not acknowledged

Folk artists

Don't speak up when I do

Am Complicit

\* When I stay within my comfort zone

Don't say what I think

Act quickly without thinking

Ditto, More Ditto!

When I'm not patient enough to really listen

I make assumptions re race, ethnicity or social class

we trying to fit artists into pre-conceived categories

Don't become aware of white privilege/micro-aggressions

\* Say nothing / am silent

- am known the govt.

am not trying to expand our circle.

accepting the status quo - b/c the problem feels to try to impact.

when I don't have the authority

when I don't have appropriate communication words

When I work in a vacuum

\* Forget to include community reps at all levels of project management

Accept status quo - progress

- alienate the power structure

→ who is at the table?

→ expect "diversity" to fall into my outstretched hand

→ don't provide options for accessibility

- when not recruiting new folklorists

- when we don't recognize the field

Sit around the tables.

I am part of the solution when I

Be willing to take a Risk

Sit with discomfort, don't expect a quick solution

"The Long Haul"

"After the storm"

Step back + listen

say something instead of being silent - but it's always true context

Look into my self perceptions

Ditto. Need to stay open

Move out of comfort zone

Be patient and provide deep technical assistance

When I just be with people.

acknowledge my privilege

Use my position to raise awareness / make change

keep investigating policies (eg. Freedom of speech)

collaborate w/ others

\* question the status quo

Trust myself

Ask hard questions + be willing to take some heat/risk

Stay here + create space

Share knowledge

provide access + advocacy

educate panels/panelists

Serve as an educator

provide

take criticism/feedback from the community

I serve and apply it constructively

Share Curious

invite challenge

Find allies

broader space for others engagement

WRITE GRANTS FOR PEOPLE

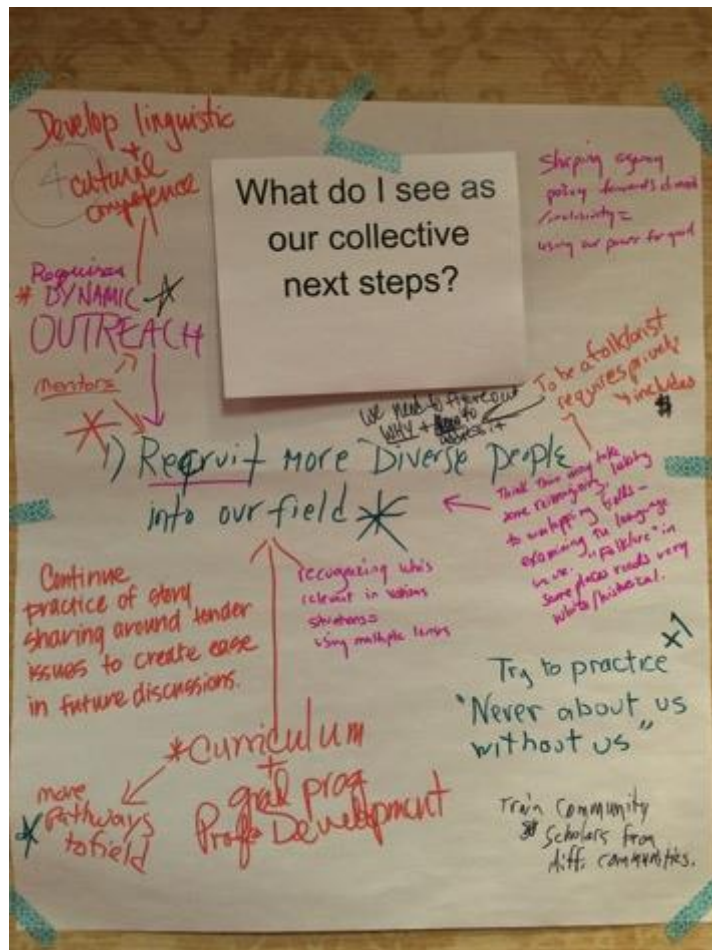
MEANINGFUL public programming

PROVIDE MENTORSHIP + PAID internships to emerging folklorists of color

(and allied fields)

+ pay folklorists

PROVIDE access to fieldwork equipment!



Share success - stories from the field + short comings

kind of audit of what the obstacles are + what the obstacles are + what the obstacles are

accept we have a problem of inclusion and work on changing it

be actively involved in transmitting to the next generation & public folklorists.

Being mentors! internships!

Re-assess "who we are" - redefine "the field" to be more inclusive -

- meet people where they are. → examine of ingrained racism in field - acknowledge it.
- identify common language around equity
- Adaptable standards for folk arts programs.
- leadership institute for POC.

## APPENDIX D Reading/Watching list

### **Articles**

The Case for Reparations, Ta-Nehisi Coates:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

“White Women, Patriarchy, and White Superiority”:

<http://blog.world-trust.org/blog/a-personal-reflection-on-how-a-white-womans-racism-and-white-superiority-shows-up>

“Has ‘Diversity’ Lost its Meaning,” Anna Holmes:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/01/magazine/has-diversity-lost-its-meaning.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fmagazine&action=click&contentCollection=magazine&region=stream&module=stream\\_unit&version=search&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=sectionfront&\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/01/magazine/has-diversity-lost-its-meaning.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fmagazine&action=click&contentCollection=magazine&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=search&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=sectionfront&_r=1)

“What the Data Really Says About Police and Racial Bias”:

<http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2016/07/data-police-racial-bias#6>

“Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the Arts: It is Possible”: <https://alternateroots.org/equity-diversity-and-inclusion-in-the-arts-it-is-possible/>

### **Books**

*Between the World and Me*, Ta-Nehisi Coates

*Bad Feminist*, Roxane Gay

*How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America*, Kiese Laymon

*Citizen*, Claudine Rankin

*The Fire This Time: A New Generation Speaks about Race*, Jesmyn Ward

### **Websites**

Racial Equity Tools website, full of resources: [www.racialequitytools.org/](http://www.racialequitytools.org/)

